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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 /054 W
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INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION NATO
AMCONSUL ADANA
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
AMCONSUL IZMIR
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES
EUCOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 4594

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MORG, TU
SUBJ: TURKISH GROUND FORCES COMMANDER CHALLENGES HIS RETIREMENT

REF: ANKARA 4241 (DTG 021415Z JUN 77)

1. THREE MINOR ANKARA NEWSPAPERS JUNE 15 IN VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL ARTICLES (ALL APPARENTLY BASED ON A TURKISH NEWS AGENCY DISPATCH), REPORTED THAT FORMER ARMY COMMANDER, GENERAL NAMIK KEMAL ERSUN, HAS PETITIONED THE MILITARY HIGH ADMINISTRATION COURT TO ANNUL HIS RETIREMENT DECREE. ERSUN'S HASTY RETIREMENT JUST FOUR DAYS BEFORE GENERAL ELECTIONS SET OFF A SPATE OF RUMORS, INCLUDING ALLEGATIONS OF HIS INVOLVEMENT IN A RIGHT-WING COUP PLOT. GENERAL ERSUN IS REPORTEDLY SEEKING ANNULMENT OF HIS RETIREMENT DECREE ON GROUNDS THAT IT WAS IN VIOLATION OF REGULATIONS. HE IS REPORTEDLY NOT REPEAT NOT SEEKING REINSTATEMENT IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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ARMY, BUT HAS UNDERTAKEN THE APPEAL TO CLEAR HIS NAME OF ALLEGATIONS OF INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.

2. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLES, ERSUN CLAIMS HIS REMOVAL IS RELATED TO AN INVESTIGATION HE WAS CONDUCTING AGAINST THIRD ARMY COMMANDER, GENERAL ALI FETHI ESENER, FOR PRESENTING PRIMIN DEMIREL AN AWARD IN CONTRAVENTION OF ARMY REGULATIONS.

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THE ARTICLES ASSERT THAT DEMIREL WANTED ERSUN REMOVED AND ESENER (WHOM DEMIREL WOULD ALLEGEDLY PREFER TO SEE REPLACE TURKISH CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL SEMIH SANCAR WHEN HE RETIRES IN MARCH 1978) MADE ARMY COMMANDER.

3. TO COMPOUND CURRENT UNCERTAINTY AT HIGHEST LEVELS OF TURKISH ARMY, ARTICLES POINT OUT THAT IN VIOLATION OF ARMY REGULATIONS AND PAST PRACTICE, ARMY COMMANDER POSITION HAS NOT BEEN FILLED TEMPORARILY BY THE MOST SENIOR UNIT COMMANDER (WHICH WOULD BE FIRST ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL ADNAN ERSOZ). INSTEAD, CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL SENCAR HAS ASSUMED THE DUTIES OF THE ARMY COMMANDER.

4. COMMENT: ERSUN'S SUDDEN RETIREMENT FOUR DAYS BEFORE ELECTION GAVE RISE TO WIDESPREAD RUMORS OF HIS INVOLVEMENT IN ANTI-GOVERNMENT OR ANTI-ECEVIT PLOTTING. HOWEVER, ERSUN WAS REPORTED TO HAVE NOT REPEAT NOT BEEN POPULAR WITHIN THE ARMY; THEREFORE, A CONVINCING ARGUMENT COULD BE MADE THAT HE WAS FORCED OUT IN ORDER TO REMOVE HIM FROM A POSITION WHERE HE MIGHT REPLACE CHIEF OF STAFF SANCAR. ERSUN'S REPORTED EXPLANATION OF THE EVENT DOES NOT TOTALLY CLARIFY THE SITUATION, BUT IT DOES LEND CREDENCE TO THE ARGUMENT THAT IT WAS ESSENTIALLY A MATTER OF INTERNAL MILITARY POLITICS. NVERTHELESS, NO GOOD EXPLANATION OF THE TIMING HAS YET BEEN OFFERED.
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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